

# **Transliminal Ontologic: A Theoretical Exploration of Meaning-Density and Temporality**

## **Abstract**

This paper investigates how subjective temporal experience can be understood through the lens of "meaning-density"—the intensity of significance within lived moments. Drawing on phenomenological thought, particularly Husserl's analyses of internal time-consciousness, Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world, and Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on embodiment, the study refines a theoretical framework called transliminal ontologic. This framework posits that our being is always at a threshold, a liminal space between "mine" and "other," constantly negotiating between the familiar and the alien. Central to this framework is the notion of "meaning-density," a concept describing how phenomena can become so restricted or richly layered as to slow or expand our felt experience of time. Building on genealogical and hermeneutical approaches, the paper demonstrates how meaning-density modifies Husserl's retention-protection dynamic, clarifies the bodily basis of temporal distortion, and offers a novel avenue for understanding how the "thickness" of meaning shapes everyday temporality. The study further explores the concept of "remnancy," arguing that phenomena are not inherent properties of beings but rather traces left by our engagement with them, forming the basis for a "Science of Articulation" that is always already underway. The paper primarily utilizes a theoretical approach, employing illustrative examples and drawing on existing phenomenological literature to develop and support its arguments. It concludes by considering the cultural, ethical, and interdisciplinary implications of this framework, suggesting potential avenues for future empirical research.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Rationale**

The question of time has perennially occupied phenomenological inquiry (Husserl, 1964; Heidegger, 1962). Rather than taking time as a neutral container, phenomenologists investigate how time is *lived*—felt as fast, slow, stretched, or compressed. This paper explores how *meaning-density*—moments in which the significance of phenomena either compresses or expands—can illuminate our understanding of subjective temporal experience. Consider, for instance, the contrast between waiting in a sterile, unstimulating environment and being engrossed in a captivating artistic performance. These experiences, though seemingly disparate, share a common thread: a distortion of subjective temporal experience that arises from the intensity of meaning-engagement required by the situation. This paper argues that understanding this distortion is key to understanding the

very nature of human being, and it proposes a theoretical framework—transliminal ontologic—to achieve this understanding.

## **1.2 Contemporary Context**

Recent phenomenological literature continues to examine temporal consciousness, including neurophenomenological investigations (Varela & Shear, 1999), embodied cognition approaches (Gallagher, 2005), and detailed micro-analyses of everyday experience (Moran & Cohen, 2012). These lines of research have shed light on the role of the body, intersubjectivity, and culture in shaping our experience of time. For instance, Varela's work on neurophenomenology attempts to bridge the gap between subjective experience and neural processes, while Gallagher has emphasized the fundamental role of the body in shaping our perception of time and space. These studies have significantly advanced our understanding of the lived experience of time. However, fewer studies have systematically dissected how densely charged or sparsely constrained meaning-fields alter our subjective sense of time.

This paper's transliminal ontologic approach zeroes in on threshold conditions—moments that highlight one's being as both "mine" and "other"—to explain the paradoxical convergence of slow time in both minimal and abundant contexts. We expand classical phenomenological frameworks by examining how genealogical layers—the accumulated sediment of past experiences—shape each new encounter, thereby influencing the dynamic of retention (past) and protention (future) central to Husserl's account of the lived present. This approach allows us to understand how the "thickness" or "thinness" of meaning in a given situation can dramatically alter our perception of time's passage. Furthermore, by emphasizing the concept of "remnancy," we argue that phenomena are not inherent properties of beings but rather traces left by our engagement with them. This perspective offers a novel avenue for understanding how our ongoing articulation of meaning shapes not only our experience of time but also our very being in the world.

## **2. Comparative Positioning: Transliminal Ontologic Among Phenomenological Approaches**

Before detailing our theoretical framework, it is useful to situate transliminal ontologic within contemporary phenomenological scholarship on time. Below are three major streams:

### **2.1 Classical Husserlian Temporal Analysis:**

Edmund Husserl's work on internal time-consciousness remains foundational to phenomenological understandings of time. In *The*

*Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (1964), Husserl meticulously analyzes the structure of temporal experience, arguing that consciousness is inherently temporal. He introduces the concepts of *primal impression*, *retention*, and *protention* to describe the flow of consciousness. The *primal impression* is the immediate "now" point of experience. *Retention* is the immediate past that still clings to the present, gradually fading away but still influencing our experience. *Protention* is the anticipated future, the horizon of possibilities that we project ahead of ourselves.

Husserl's model emphasizes the continuous flow of consciousness, where each moment is not an isolated point but a dynamic interplay of past, present, and future. However, critics have pointed out that Husserl's focus on the individual consciousness can sometimes neglect the intersubjective and embodied dimensions of temporal experience (Moran & Cohen, 2012).

## **2.2 Heideggerian and Post-Heideggerian Temporality:**

Martin Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1962), radicalizes Husserl's account by grounding temporality in the very structure of *Dasein* (human being). For Heidegger, time is not merely a feature of consciousness but the fundamental horizon against which Being itself is understood. He introduces the concept of *ekstatic temporality*, where *Dasein* is always "outside" of itself, projecting ahead into possibilities (*projection*) while simultaneously being thrown into a pre-existing world of meaning (*thrownness*). This "ekstasis" is further characterized by a "Being-towards-death," a finitude that shapes *Dasein*'s understanding of its possibilities.

Heidegger's work shifts the focus from the flow of individual consciousness to the broader existential structures that shape our being-in-the-world. William Blattner (1999), in *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism*, further explores these concepts, arguing that Heidegger's understanding of time is fundamentally idealistic, emphasizing the role of *Dasein* in constituting time itself. However, some critics argue that Heidegger's emphasis on finitude and death can overshadow the richness and diversity of everyday temporal experience (Dreyfus, 1991).

## **2.3 Merleau-Pontian Embodiment:**

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), emphasizes the embodied nature of perception and experience. He argues against a purely mentalistic account of consciousness, highlighting the body as the center of our engagement with the world. For Merleau-Ponty, time is not an abstract concept but is lived through the body's movements, rhythms, and interactions with its environment. He introduces the concept

of the "body schema," a pre-reflective bodily awareness that shapes our perception of space and time.

Merleau-Ponty's work brings the body to the forefront of phenomenological inquiry, emphasizing that our experience of time is fundamentally intertwined with our bodily being-in-the-world. His ideas have been influential in embodied cognition approaches, which emphasize the role of the body in shaping the mind (Gallagher, 2005). However, some critics argue that Merleau-Ponty's focus on the individual body can sometimes downplay the social and cultural dimensions of embodied experience (Crossley, 1995).

## 2.4 Transliminal Ontologic: A Synthesis and Extension

Transliminal ontologic extends these approaches by:

- **Interacting with Husserl's Retention-Protention Dynamic:** When a moment is "densely restricted," our retentive horizon compresses around a narrow focus. The immediate past, instead of being a rich tapestry of experiences, becomes dominated by a single, repetitive event. Conversely, the protentive field may feel distant or unattainable. The anticipated future, instead of being a horizon of open possibilities, shrinks to a singular possibility. Conversely, when we experience abundant meaning, we expand our protentive field. We don't just anticipate a single outcome but perceive many relational ties, many potential paths forward. This richness of possibilities lengthens or deepens the now, making time feel both slower and fuller.
- **Genealogical Layering Deepening Heideggerian Insights:** Each new "showing" of phenomena is shaped by prior interpretations, thereby intensifying or diluting the significance of each new moment. This builds upon Heidegger's notion of "thrownness" by explicitly articulating how our past experiences are not simply left behind but actively shape our present understanding. Every encounter is filtered through the sedimented layers of our personal history, creating a unique "thickness" to each moment.
- **Integrating Embodiment to Underscore Bodily Mediation:** Extending Merleau-Ponty's framework, transliminal ontologic emphasizes how bodily sensations modulate the immediacy and "thickness" of the temporal present. The body is not merely a passive recipient of temporal experience but actively shapes it.

In this way, transliminal ontologic is not a departure from but rather a synthesis and extension of these major branches of phenomenological thought. It offers a novel framework for understanding how meaning,

temporality, and embodiment are intertwined, providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of the lived experience of time.

### **3. Methodological Framework: A Theoretical Exploration**

This paper adopts a theoretical approach, drawing on key concepts from phenomenology to develop the framework of transliminal ontologic. While it does not involve the collection of empirical data through interviews or experiments, it engages in a rigorous conceptual analysis, employing illustrative examples and drawing connections to existing phenomenological literature to support its arguments.

#### **3.1 Phenomenological Reduction and Genealogical Anchoring**

The study utilizes a modified approach to Husserl's *epoché*—a bracketing of assumptions that allows us to examine phenomena with greater clarity. While acknowledging the impossibility of completely eliminating all presuppositions, the approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing and critically examining our pre-understandings as we engage with the concepts under investigation. This involves a continuous process of reflection and questioning, aiming for transparency rather than absolute neutrality.

This approach also recognizes that each phenomenon appears within genealogical layers of prior engagement. No moment is purely “new”: the residual traces, or *remnants*, of past experiences filter how the “now” emerges. We are never simply encountering a raw, uninterpreted reality but are always already interpreting it through the lens of our past experiences, both personal and cultural. Thus, the methodological stance is twofold:

- **Provisional Reduction:** Striving for a reflective stance that acknowledges and brackets, as much as possible, naive assumptions about time to observe how it is *theoretically constructed* within different phenomenological frameworks.
- **Genealogical Sensitivity:** Recognizing that each theoretical concept and illustrative example stands on the sedimented ground of earlier experiences and interpretations. This involves acknowledging the historical and cultural context of phenomenological ideas and recognizing their influence on our present understanding.

#### **3.2 Illustrative Examples**

To illuminate the theoretical concepts, the paper employs hypothetical scenarios and draws upon examples from everyday life. These examples are not intended as empirical data but as heuristic tools to illustrate the principles of meaning-density and its impact on temporal experience. For

instance, the experience of waiting in a sterile environment (like a DMV) is used to exemplify restricted meaning, while immersion in a creative activity (like painting or playing music) is used to illustrate abundant meaning. These examples, while not based on specific interviews conducted for this study, are drawn from common human experiences and are consistent with observations found in existing phenomenological literature (e.g., Buytendijk's (1933) analysis of boredom, or Merleau-Ponty's (1962) descriptions of embodied engagement).

**3.3 Engagement with Existing Phenomenological Data** In addition to illustrative examples, the paper engages with existing phenomenological data and analyses found in published works. For example, Buytendijk's (1933) work on boredom provides empirical grounding for the concept of restricted meaning fields, while Merleau-Ponty's (1962) descriptions of embodied engagement offer insights into the bodily mediation of time. By connecting the theoretical framework to established phenomenological observations, the paper aims to demonstrate the applicability and relevance of transliminal ontologic to understanding lived experience.

### **3.4 Validity Measures in Theoretical Inquiry**

While this paper does not claim to present empirical findings in the traditional sense, it maintains rigor through:

- **Conceptual Coherence:** Ensuring that the theoretical arguments are logically consistent and build upon each other in a clear and coherent manner.
- **Intertextual Validation:** Grounding the theoretical framework in established phenomenological concepts and literature, demonstrating its connections to and extensions of existing ideas.
- **Illustrative Adequacy:** Utilizing examples that effectively illuminate the theoretical concepts and resonate with common human experiences.
- **Reflexivity:** Acknowledging the limitations of a purely theoretical approach and explicitly stating the role of illustrative examples.

Through these measures, the study aims to present a compelling and insightful theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between meaning-density and temporality.

## **4. Theoretical Elaboration: Meaning-Density and Temporality**

### **4.1 Meaning-Density and Husserl's Retention-Protention**

Husserl (1964, 1991) positions time-consciousness as the dynamic interplay of retention (the immediate past that still clings to the present) and

protention (the anticipated future we lean into). Meaning-density modifies this dynamic by shifting how much significance is attributed to the retentional trace or to the protentional horizon. It alters the "weight" or "thickness" of each element, thereby changing the overall shape of our temporal experience.

- **Restricted Field Example (Waiting):**

- **Illustrative Scenario:** Imagine waiting in a sterile, unstimulating environment like a DMV, where your number is displayed on a digital screen. The retentional continuum tightens around minimal stimuli—each beep of the number caller, the shuffling of others waiting, the uncomfortable chair. These minor events, normally insignificant, become disproportionately salient due to the restricted field of meaning. Each beep is not just a sound; it's a potential signifier of progress, a possible end to the waiting.
- **Interpretation:** The immediate past, instead of being a rich tapestry of diverse experiences, becomes dominated by the repetitive and monotonous experience of waiting. The protentional field narrows to just "when will it be my turn?" The anticipated future, instead of being a horizon of open possibilities, shrinks to the single, highly anticipated event of one's number being called. Time stretches out because each micro-event is affectively charged, overshadowing broader future possibilities and creating a sense of being "stuck" in the present. The restricted field of meaning amplifies the significance of each passing moment, making it feel longer and more drawn out. This scenario aligns with Buytendijk's (1933) observation that boredom arises when "we expect something from the situation which it cannot give us" (p. 222), leading to a feeling of being trapped in an empty present.

- **Abundant Field Example (Aesthetic Immersion):**

- **Illustrative Scenario:** Consider a musician deeply engrossed in a piano improvisation. Each note played resonates with the previous ones, creating a dense network of interconnected meanings.
- **Interpretation:** The immediate past is not a monotonous repetition but a constantly evolving tapestry of musical ideas. The protentional side is likewise open-ended, allowing for multiple possibilities, a vast landscape of potential musical directions. The pianist is not just anticipating the next note but is immersed in a field of potential melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. This expands the now: time feels slow, yet fulfilling, because each moment is saturated with meaning. The abundance of meaningful connections stretches the present,

creating a sense of timelessness and immersion, similar to what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes as "flow."

## 4.2 Embodiment and Physical States

Merleau-Ponty's principle that we *live our body* underscores how somatic conditions affect time. Our bodily state is not merely a reflection of our experience but actively shapes it. This is particularly evident in the context of meaning-density.

- **Illustrative Example 1 (Anxiety and Waiting):** One might experience "tight shoulders and shallow breathing" during anxious waiting, correlating with a "dragging" sense of time. The physical tension associated with anxiety constricts the body, mirroring the restricted field of meaning. The shallow breathing further reinforces this constriction, limiting the flow of oxygen and contributing to a feeling of being trapped in the present. The body, in this case, becomes a site of tension and restriction, amplifying the perceived slowness of time.
- **Illustrative Example 2 (Poetry and Relaxation):** Conversely, one might experience a "relaxed posture and deeper breathing" while reading poetry, experiencing a "slow, warm stillness." The relaxed posture and deep breathing associated with aesthetic engagement allow for a more expansive experience of the present. The body, in this case, becomes a vessel for the rich and abundant meaning of the poetry, facilitating a sense of timeless immersion.

These examples, consistent with Merleau-Ponty's (1962) emphasis on the lived body, demonstrate that the body is not a passive recipient of temporal experience but the active site where meaning-density unfolds. The body's posture, tension, and rhythms influence how retention and protention are carried—or disrupted—thereby shaping our subjective experience of time.

## 4.3 Genealogical Layers

Phenomena always appear within a historical context: repeated experiences of waiting or extended skill-development create thick interpretive backgrounds. This genealogical layering helps explain why individuals might react differently to similar situations. For instance, someone who has developed strategies for making waiting productive might not experience the same temporal distortion at the DMV as someone who hasn't.

Genealogical layering also explains how expertise in a particular domain can alter one's temporal experience. A novice musician, for example, might experience practicing scales as tedious and slow, with each note feeling isolated and disconnected. However, as they develop their skills, the



meaning-density of the practice increases. They begin to hear the relationships between notes, anticipate the next phrase, and appreciate the nuances of their technique. This increased density of meaning can transform the experience of practice from one of drudgery to one of deep engagement, where time seems to flow differently.

This concept of genealogical layering is essential for understanding how meaning-density is not a static property of a situation but is dynamically shaped by our past experiences and accumulated understandings. It highlights the importance of considering personal history when investigating the lived experience of time.

#### **4.4 Cultural and Intersubjective Dimensions of Meaning-Density**

While genealogical layering emphasizes individual history, it is crucial to recognize that our experiences are also deeply intertwined with broader cultural and intersubjective contexts. As social phenomenologists like Alfred Schutz (1967) have argued, our understanding of the world is fundamentally shaped by shared meanings, social norms, and cultural practices. These shared frameworks influence how we perceive and interpret phenomena, including our experience of time.

For example, cultural attitudes towards waiting vary significantly. In some cultures, waiting is seen as a normal and expected part of life, while in others, it is viewed as a sign of inefficiency or disrespect. These cultural norms can shape the meaning-density of waiting situations. One might imagine a person from a culture where waiting is commonplace experiencing a বৈঠক (Bengali for "waiting") at a government office very differently from someone accustomed to instant service and constant efficiency.

Similarly, cultural expectations around productivity and busyness can influence our experience of time in different activities. In societies that highly value productivity, individuals may feel pressure to constantly be busy and may experience unstructured time as empty or meaningless. This can lead to a sense of time pressure and a feeling that time is always slipping away.

Intersubjective dynamics also play a crucial role in shaping meaning-density. Our interactions with others, our shared activities, and our social roles all contribute to how we experience time. For instance, engaging in a conversation with a close friend can create a sense of abundant meaning, where time seems to flow effortlessly. Conversely, being in a social situation where one feels excluded or misunderstood can create a sense of restricted meaning, making time feel slow and uncomfortable.

Nick Crossley's (1995) work on the relational self further illuminates these intersubjective dimensions. He argues that our sense of self is not formed in isolation but emerges through our interactions and relationships with others. This relational perspective suggests that our experience of time is also inherently relational, shaped by our interactions and shared experiences within a social context.

Therefore, understanding meaning-density requires not only considering individual genealogical layering but also recognizing the broader cultural and intersubjective frameworks that shape our experiences. These shared meanings and social norms provide a crucial context for understanding how individuals interpret and experience time in different situations.

#### **4.5 Remnancy: A Novel Conceptual Contribution**

The concept of "remnancy" offers a novel way to understand the relationship between our being and the phenomena we encounter. It proposes that phenomena are not inherent properties of beings themselves but rather *traces* or *residues* left by our engagement with them. This challenges the traditional view of phenomena as objective features of the world, suggesting instead that they are co-constituted by our interpretive acts.

When we engage with a being—whether it be a tree, a piece of music, or another person—we do not encounter it in its totality. Instead, we encounter it through specific aspects that show themselves to us in a particular context and at a particular moment. These aspects, filtered through our genealogical layering and cultural understandings, leave a trace or impression on our being. This trace is what we call "remnancy."

- **Comparison with Related Concepts:**
  - **Husserl's Sedimentation:** Similar to Husserl's concept of sedimentation, remnancy acknowledges that past experiences shape our present understanding. However, remnancy emphasizes the active role of engagement in creating these traces, rather than simply the passive accumulation of experiences. Sedimentation, for Husserl, refers to the way meanings become established and taken for granted over time. Remnancy, while related, focuses on the specific traces left by individual encounters.
  - **Heidegger's Worldhood:** Heidegger's notion of "worldhood" describes the pre-existing network of meanings and relationships into which we are thrown. Remnancy complements this by highlighting how our individual engagements contribute to and modify this network. While worldhood provides the

background, remnancy emphasizes the dynamic interplay between individual and world.

- o **Merleau-Ponty's Corporeal Schema:** Merleau-Ponty's corporeal schema describes the body's pre-reflective understanding of its own possibilities for movement and action. Remnancy extends this by suggesting that our bodily engagements with the world leave traces that shape not only our physical capabilities but also our understanding of phenomena. The body, in this sense, becomes a repository of remnants, a living archive of past engagements.

**Illustrative Example:** Consider the act of learning to play a musical instrument. Each practice session, each struggle with a difficult passage, each moment of musical insight leaves a trace on the musician's being. These traces are not simply memories or learned skills; they are remnants of the musician's engagement with the instrument and the music. They shape how the musician perceives the instrument, how they approach new pieces, and how they experience the music itself. The instrument, in turn, is no longer just an object but a repository of these shared engagements, its meaning intertwined with the musician's history of interaction with it.

Remnancy, therefore, offers a dynamic and relational understanding of phenomena. It highlights the ongoing interplay between our being and the world, emphasizing that meaning is not simply discovered but is actively created through our engagements. This concept provides the foundation for a "Science of Articulation," where understanding is seen as an ongoing process of interpreting and re-interpreting the remnants of our encounters with being.

## **5. Empirical Illustrations and Case Vignettes: Hypothetical Scenarios and Literary Examples**

This section will utilize hypothetical scenarios and draw upon existing phenomenological literature to illustrate the theoretical concepts discussed above. While not based on original empirical data collected for this study, these examples serve to ground the abstract concepts in relatable experiences and connect them to established phenomenological observations.

### **5.1 Cooking as a Microcosm**

- **Hypothetical Scenario:** Imagine two scenarios: 1) Mindlessly watching a single pot of water boil, and 2) Preparing a complex meal with multiple dishes requiring precise timing and coordination.
- **Analysis:** The first scenario exemplifies restricted meaning. The individual's attention is narrowly focused on a single, uneventful task.

The retentional field is likely dominated by the monotony of waiting, and the protentional horizon limited to the anticipated event of the water boiling. This restricted meaning-field likely leads to a subjective experience of time "crawling" or "dragging." This aligns with Buytendijk's (1933) analysis of boredom, where the individual expects more from the situation than it can offer, resulting in a feeling of being trapped in an empty present.

In contrast, the second scenario involves abundant meaning. Juggling multiple dishes creates a dynamic interplay of tasks and demands. The retentional field is rich with the various steps involved in each dish, and the protentional horizon is filled with the anticipation of completing each task and coordinating their timing. This abundance of meaningful activity can lead to a feeling of time "flying by," yet each moment feels full and engaging. This scenario resonates with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of "flow," where individuals become deeply absorbed in an activity, experiencing a sense of effortless action and a distorted sense of time.

## 5.2 The Artist's Creative Process

- **Hypothetical Scenario:** Consider an artist facing a blank canvas. Initially, they might experience a sense of being "stuck," a feeling of time stagnating as they struggle to find a starting point. The blank canvas represents a potential void, a lack of defined meaning, which can be both exciting and anxiety-provoking.
- **Analysis:** This initial stage often involves a restricted meaning-field. The artist's attention might be dominated by self-doubt, a lack of inspiration, or the overwhelming number of possibilities. However, as the artist begins to work, applying colors and lines to the canvas, the experience can shift dramatically. Each brushstroke builds upon the previous ones, creating a complex interplay of color, form, and texture. The retentional field becomes filled with the history of the painting's creation, and the protentional horizon expands with each new possibility that emerges. The artist might report losing track of time, experiencing a sense of timeless immersion in the creative process.

This hypothetical scenario aligns with Merleau-Ponty's (1964) descriptions of the creative process in "Cézanne's Doubt," where he emphasizes the artist's embodied engagement with their work and the gradual emergence of meaning through the act of creation.

## 5.3 The Musician's Journey

- **Hypothetical Scenario:** Imagine a musician learning to play a new instrument. In the early stages, each note and chord change might feel like an eternity. The musician's focus is narrowly concentrated on the physical movements required, and they might experience frustration and a sense of slow, laborious progress.
- **Analysis:** This exemplifies restricted meaning-density in the initial stages of learning. Each individual movement becomes a highly charged event, stretching out time and making progress feel slow. However, as the musician gains proficiency, their experience can transform. The movements become more automatic, allowing them to engage with the music on a more holistic level. They might describe moments of intense improvisation where "time seems to disappear."

This scenario is consistent with Sudnow's (1978) detailed phenomenological account of learning to play jazz piano in "Ways of the Hand." Sudnow describes how, through extended practice, his bodily engagement with the piano transformed, allowing him to experience a sense of flow and improvisation that transcended his initial struggles.

#### 5.4 Waiting at the DMV: A Universally Restricted Experience?

- **Hypothetical Scenario:** Consider the common experience of waiting at a government office like the DMV. Individuals often describe this as a situation where time feels "excruciatingly slow." The repetitive beeping of the number calling system, the uncomfortable chairs, and the general sense of powerlessness can contribute to a highly restricted meaning-field.
- **Analysis:** This scenario suggests that certain environments and situations may be inherently more prone to generating restricted meaning-fields, leading to a shared experience of time distortion. The DMV, with its bureaucratic procedures, lack of personal agency, and often uncomfortable physical environment, seems to be a particularly potent example of such a space. This aligns with De Certeau's (1984) analysis of how power structures can shape and constrain individual experiences within specific spaces.

#### 5.5 The Meditative State: An Intentionally Cultivated Abundance?

- **Hypothetical Scenario:** Imagine an individual practicing mindfulness meditation. They focus their attention on their breath, observing the subtle sensations of each inhalation and exhalation.
- **Analysis:** This practice can be seen as an intentional cultivation of abundant meaning. By focusing on the present moment and the subtle sensations of the breath, the individual creates a rich and dynamic field of experience. This can lead to a sense of spaciousness and a slowing down of subjective time, even in the absence of external

stimuli. This resonates with Kabat-Zinn's (1994) work on mindfulness-based stress reduction, which demonstrates how mindfulness practices can alter our perception of time and enhance our ability to cope with stress and difficult emotions.

These hypothetical scenarios and their connection to existing literature demonstrate how the transliminal ontologic framework can be applied to understand a wide range of human experiences, illuminating the dynamic interplay between meaning-density and temporality.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Unique Contributions to Phenomenological Research

This theoretical exploration makes several unique contributions to the field of phenomenological research, particularly in the understanding of time, meaning, and embodiment:

- **Refinement of Husserl's Temporal Structures:** By examining how meaning-density thickens or thins the links between retention and protention, the paper shows that subjective time depends not simply on the "flow" of consciousness, as Husserl suggested, but on the *qualitative intensities* of phenomena. It demonstrates that the "weight" or "significance" attributed to past, present, and future moments is not uniform but varies according to the density of meaning in a given situation. This offers a more nuanced understanding of Husserl's model, showing how the dynamic interplay of retention and protention is modulated by the richness or sparsity of meaning in our experience.
- **Transliminal Perspective and Genealogy:** The notion that our being is always at a threshold—between "mine" and "other," between the familiar and the alien—clarifies how repeated experiences accumulate, shaping future engagements. This genealogical dimension, while alluded to by Heidegger in his discussion of facticity and thrownness, is underscored here as central to understanding time-distortion. The concept of "genealogical layering" provides a concrete mechanism for understanding how our past experiences are not simply left behind but actively shape our present perceptions and interpretations. This perspective offers a dynamic and historical dimension to phenomenological analysis, highlighting the importance of personal history in shaping our experience of the present.
- **Emphasis on Bodily Mediation:** Extending Merleau-Ponty's framework, the examples demonstrate how posture, tension, and bodily rhythms are integral to how we perceive density and thus how time unfolds. This study goes beyond simply acknowledging the embodied nature of experience and provides specific examples of how

bodily states directly influence our perception of time. By highlighting the connection between physical sensations, emotional states, and the experience of meaning-density, the paper demonstrates that the body is not a passive backdrop to our experience but an active participant in the constitution of time.

- **Introduction of Remnancy and the Science of Articulation:** This study introduces the concept of "remnancy" to describe the traces left by our engagement with beings. This concept challenges the traditional view of phenomena as inherent properties of objects, arguing instead that phenomena are the result of our interpretive engagement with the world. This perspective allows us to see how meaning is not simply discovered but is actively created through our ongoing interaction with beings. Furthermore, the idea that remnancy forms the basis for a "Science of Articulation" that is always already underway highlights the fundamentally interpretive nature of human existence. We are not passive recipients of meaning but active participants in its creation, constantly articulating and re-articulating our understanding of the world through the traces left by our engagements.

## 6.2 Addressing Potential Counterarguments

One potential counterargument to the transliminal ontologic perspective might come from a more traditional, objectivist view of time. This perspective might argue that subjective experiences of time distortion are merely illusions, and that "real" time continues to flow uniformly regardless of our perceptions. However, this objection fails to account for the fundamental role of lived experience in shaping our understanding of reality. Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach, prioritizes the study of experience *as it is lived*, rather than attempting to reduce it to objective measurements. From a phenomenological perspective, the subjective experience of time *is* the reality of time as we live it.

Another potential criticism might come from cognitive psychology, which might attempt to explain temporal distortions in terms of attentional mechanisms or cognitive biases. While these explanations can certainly shed light on some aspects of temporal experience, they often fail to capture the full richness and complexity of lived temporality as it is intertwined with meaning, embodiment, and our existential situation. Transliminal ontologic, by contrast, offers a more holistic framework that integrates these various dimensions of experience.

## 6.3 Implications and Broader Significance

The transliminal ontologic framework offers a new lens through which to examine a wide range of phenomena, including:

- **Boredom and Engagement:** Understanding how restricted and abundant meaning-fields shape our experience of time can provide insights into the nature of boredom and engagement.
- **Creativity and Flow:** The framework sheds light on the experience of "flow" states, where individuals become deeply absorbed in creative activities.
- **Anxiety and Trauma:** The framework could be useful for understanding the temporal experience of individuals suffering from anxiety disorders or trauma.
- **The Nature of Human Being:** Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of what it means to be human, highlighting our unique role as beings through whom Being articulates itself.

## 6.4 Future Directions

This theoretical exploration opens up several avenues for future research:

- **Empirical Investigations:** While this paper has focused on a theoretical approach, future research could involve conducting empirical studies to investigate the principles of transliminal ontologic. This could involve collecting qualitative data through interviews and focus groups, as well as quantitative data through physiological measurements and behavioral observations.
- **Comparative Cultural Studies:** Investigating how cultural norms and values about waiting, attention, and productivity might produce different patterns of meaning-density and temporal experience.
- **Longitudinal Case Studies:** While this paper presented hypothetical scenarios, future studies could use longitudinal designs to track individuals over extended periods to examine how genealogical transformations gradually shift time perception.
- **Integration with Cognitive Science and Neuroscience:** Collaborations measuring physiological indicators such as heart rate variability, cortisol levels, or neural activity (e.g., using EEG or fMRI) might reveal correlations between physiological states and high or low meaning-density contexts.
  - **Pilot Study Proposal:** A pilot study could involve exposing participants to controlled stimuli designed to elicit experiences of restricted and abundant meaning while simultaneously monitoring their physiological responses (e.g., heart rate variability, EEG). This could involve comparing, for instance, the physiological responses of individuals watching a repetitive, monotonous video (restricted meaning) versus a complex, engaging film (abundant meaning). Participants could also be asked to provide subjective reports of their temporal experience and level of engagement. This would provide preliminary data



on the potential physiological correlates of meaning-density and temporal distortion.

## 6.5 Relationship to Cognitive and Neurophenomenological Approaches

While this study is firmly rooted in phenomenology, it is valuable to consider its relationship to other approaches, particularly cognitive psychology and neurophenomenology.

- **Cognitive Psychology:** Cognitive psychology often explains temporal distortions in terms of attentional mechanisms, working memory, and cognitive biases. For example, the perceived slowness of time during boring or unpleasant experiences might be attributed to increased attention to the passage of time itself. While these explanations can illuminate important cognitive processes, they often treat subjective experience as a secondary phenomenon, derived from underlying cognitive mechanisms. Transliminal ontologic, in contrast, prioritizes lived experience as the starting point for inquiry, seeking to understand how cognitive processes are themselves embedded within a broader context of meaning and embodiment. It suggests that attention and memory are not simply neutral cognitive functions but are shaped by the meaning-density of the situation and our genealogical history.
- **Neurophenomenology:** Neurophenomenology, as pioneered by Varela and Shear (1999), attempts to bridge the gap between first-person experience and third-person scientific observation by integrating phenomenological methods with neuroscience research. This approach recognizes the importance of subjective experience while also seeking to understand its neural correlates. Transliminal ontologic aligns with the spirit of neurophenomenology by emphasizing the importance of both subjective experience and the potential for interdisciplinary dialogue. The concept of meaning-density, for instance, could be a valuable point of connection between phenomenological descriptions and neuroscientific investigations. Future research could explore whether different patterns of brain activity are associated with experiences of high and low meaning-density, potentially revealing the neural underpinnings of temporal distortion.

While transliminal ontologic shares some common ground with these approaches, it also offers a unique perspective. By emphasizing the role of meaning, genealogy, and the dynamic interplay between self and world, it provides a more holistic and existentially grounded understanding of temporal experience than purely cognitive or neuroscientific approaches

typically offer. It moves beyond simply explaining the mechanisms of temporal distortion and seeks to understand how these distortions are intertwined with our fundamental way of being in the world.

## 6.6 Ethical and Existential Implications of Remnancy

The concept of "remnancy" carries significant ethical and existential implications. If our engagements with the world leave lasting traces, then we bear a responsibility for the kinds of traces we create. This is not merely a matter of individual morality but extends to our collective responsibility for shaping the world we inhabit.

- **Environmental Ethics:** Our interactions with the natural environment leave remnants that extend far beyond our immediate experience. Pollution, deforestation, and climate change are not just physical alterations of the environment; they are remnants of our engagement with the natural world that will shape the experiences of future generations. Recognizing this, we have an ethical obligation to engage with the environment in a way that leaves positive and sustainable remnants.
- **Social and Political Responsibility:** Our social and political actions also leave remnants that shape the lives of others. Injustice, inequality, and oppression are not abstract concepts but lived realities that are perpetuated through the remnants of past actions. We have a collective responsibility to create social and political structures that foster justice, equality, and human flourishing, leaving positive remnants for future generations.
- **Technological Development:** The technologies we create and use also leave remnants that shape our experience and understanding of the world. Social media, for example, leaves traces that can affect our attention spans, our relationships, and our sense of self. We must be mindful of the kinds of remnants that our technologies are creating and strive to develop technologies that enhance rather than diminish human experience.

In essence, the concept of remnancy highlights the profound interconnectedness of all beings and the ethical weight of our actions. It challenges us to be more mindful of the traces we leave in the world and to strive to create a world that is characterized by meaningful engagement, justice, and sustainability. It calls for a "Science of Articulation" that is not only rigorous and insightful but also ethically informed and responsible. This means acknowledging that our interpretations and actions are never neutral but always contribute to the ongoing shaping of the world and the experiences of others.

## 7. Conclusion

Meaning-density offers a fresh vantage point for understanding how time is lived in day-to-day experiences. By examining both restricted and abundant meaning-fields, we see that "slow time" can derive from boredom or from immersion, highlighting the interpretive texture of our being at the threshold of self and world. The concept of "remnancy" further illuminates how our engagements with beings leave traces that shape our future understandings, forming the basis for a "Science of Articulation" that is always already underway. In so doing, transliminal ontologic expands classical phenomenological structures (retention-protection, embodiment, genealogical layering), offering a cohesive yet flexible framework for future research on the inseparability of meaning and temporality. This framework provides a powerful lens for understanding not only our experience of time but also the very nature of human being as a fundamentally temporal, interpretive, and embodied being-in-the-world. The study underscores our unique role as beings through whom Being comes to understand itself, highlighting the dynamic, multidimensional, and elastic nature of human existence. Furthermore, by considering the cultural, ethical, and interdisciplinary implications of this framework, we open up new avenues for understanding the profound interconnectedness of meaning, time, and the human condition. As we continue to explore the intricacies of transliminality, we are challenged to be more mindful of the remnants we create and to strive towards a more meaningful and responsible way of being in the world. The insights gained through this exploration call for a renewed appreciation of the richness and complexity of lived experience and offer a powerful framework for navigating the challenges and opportunities of human existence in the 21st century. This theoretical exploration lays the groundwork for future empirical investigations into the dynamic interplay of meaning-density, temporality, and embodiment, ultimately aiming for a deeper understanding of what it means to be human.